

3.0 Implementation Strategy and Action Plan

3.1 Downtown Projects and Initiatives

The attached "Strategy Board" summarizes all of the projects indicated in the master plan into one document to be used by the various groups that will be implementing the plan. The strategy board divides the projects in several ways.

3.1.1 Goals

Each of the plan strategies and visions are outlined in the strategy board. It is important to remember the ultimate marketing and development strategies that each project supports. Of course, each of these strategies is linked with one another, but failure to achieve any one goal does not negate the ability to achieve others.

3.1.2 Responsibilities

The strategy board presents suggestions for organizations or entities that will be responsible for leading the implementation of each of the projects. These are color-coded and need to be continually reviewed. While an agency may be assigned lead role for implementation, each of these projects should be pursued through partnerships.

3.1.3 Time Frames

The projects are divided into three time frames. The first series of projects are demonstration projects that should begin immediately. These will be completed within the first two years after the plan is adopted. The second set of projects is labeled "next steps." Some of these are more advanced projects while others are continuations of projects that began during the demonstration period. The next step projects should be completed within the following two years. The final series of projects are long-term or plan completion projects. While this category remains largely empty, many of the projects begun in the next steps phase will not be completed until after the 2004 deadline. Over time this category will continue to fill up as priorities change.

3.1.4 The Role of The Downtown Advisory Group

The strategy board indicates that many of the early projects will reside with the Downtown Advisory Group and that many of the more complex later projects will be the responsibility of the new Blacksburg Partnership.

The Downtown Advisory Group should remain intact with individual projects divided into a more committee-oriented focus. Suggested committees are as follows:

Blacksburg Partnership Committee – This would be a small committee comprised of representatives of the Town, the University, and the business community. The task of this committee is to structure the Blacksburg Partnership.

Marketing and Events – This committee would be comprised of local merchants, town representatives, and interested volunteers who would organize events and coordinate marketing efforts for the downtown.

Neighborhood Relations – This committee would be responsible for communicating plan implementation projects and working to incorporate links to Blacksburg Neighborhoods. This committee should have membership from the Townscape Committee and Neighborhood Representatives.

Parking Committee – This committee should be comprised of major downtown property owners (including religious institutions) and should have representation from the Town and the University. The task of this committee would be to inventory downtown parking, identify ways to maximize efficiency, and develop a strategy for testing implementation strategies.

Ultimately the Downtown Advisory Group's role may change as the Blacksburg Partnership comes into being. However, the DAG will remain a critical group to implement the plan over the coming months.

3.2 Some Immediate Priorities

These projects are several that warrant immediate attention and can be implemented in the short term with little capital expenditures.

- Creation of Blacksburg Events Non-Profit and the hosting of events in the downtown. This step will do more to get people

acquainted (or re-acquainted) with downtown Blacksburg than perhaps any single project could.

- Developing a parking management strategy will be one of the more difficult but rewarding programs that needs to be implemented. This cannot happen without the cooperation and active participation of downtown merchants and property owners. A Town Government led effort with no support will not succeed. The merchants must team with the Town to make this project work and be willing to experiment with some alternative strategies before giving up on a permanent solution.
- Crosswalks and wayfinding, from a capital budget standpoint, will be the most important short-term implementation projects. Directions to parking, the Farmers Market, the Lyric, and other downtown amenities should be a top priority downtown. Simple painted crosswalks will also go a long way toward creating a more pedestrian friendly environment.
- Hosting a development summit will be an excellent way to begin to understand the specific needs and complexities of doing development in a downtown setting in Blacksburg. This should take place soon both to communicate the goals of the master plan and to share concerns about the development process downtown.

3.3 Conclusion

Blacksburg, Virginia is a dynamic community. It is a vibrant and successful place today. It's potential can be much greater. The Blacksburg Partnership can emerge as a national model for University/Town relations that can accomplish substantial mutual goals for the Town and its citizens and the University and its Students. The projects presented in this master plan represent an opportunity to create special places in downtown Blacksburg that will strongly impact generations of visitors and residents to come. The challenge for Blacksburg will be to use this tool to create a place of economic prosperity, a place to make memories, and a place to be a citizen of a real functioning University Town. The Blacksburg community is ready to meet this challenge.